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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE PROBLEM OF LIFE.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."—1 JOHN iii. 2, 3.

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."—ROM. viii. 18-21.

Man's imperfection, the universal sinfulness of man, the corruption of man's conduct, and, in one sense, of his nature, has been admitted in all ages, and by all schools of Christian theology, and just as much in other religions as in the Christian. It is a fact about which there can be no disputation. The whole world lies in wickedness.

The theory or philosophy of the fact of universal sinfulness has varied. Without regarding for a moment the conceptions given by those of other religions, there are two Scriptural germs from which two very different views of the condition of the human race may be evolved. One is the historic, or supposed historic, view regarding the origin of man; and the other is what might be called the prospective, the prophetic view, as regards the development or termination of man—one acting from the past, and laying foundations in supposed history, and the other taking its forms

SUNDAY MORNING, June 7, 1874. LESSON: Matt., xx. 17-34. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 255, 1,235, 1,263.

from the future ideal, and arguing from that what must be the condition antecedent or preceding such a prophetic development.

The parable of the Garden of Eden, of the fall of man, and the universal sinfulness of men as derived from their involuntary connection with the great unknown Head, strangely enough has formed the basis of the most enduring and the most universal theory, a theory, however, which is also the most oppressive, and the most inconsistent with every one of those feelings which spring up under a rigorous education in the ethical principles of the Gospel.

It is not possible to develop in the human mind that character which made Christ what he was; it is impossible to develop any human being according to the ethical principles which Jesus taught, and then, in the light of the text and of the reason and the humanity of any Christian period, to go back and assume the facts and the philosophy which have lain at the basis of the theology of ages, without the violation of every moral instinct, of the sense of truth, of the sense of justice, and of the sense of honor. Truth, justice, and honor are in such a sense fundamental that if you violate them there is no foundation on which any system can stand, and all systems must go to the dust; and that religion which has come down to us teaching that we are condemned not on account of what we have ourselves done, but on account of that which was done for us thousands of years ago; that religion which teaches us that we are held amenable to eternal penalty on account of the sins of others, is so violative of every educated instinct of right and justice that no man can contemplate it with any degree of moral emotion and not repudiate it in his nature as the foundation of a theology.

This view when compared with the views of human experience under a divine providence grows more repugnant to the educated moral sense of mankind under Gospel influences. It contorts the truth, and distorts our view of the divine government. It puts the divine government on grounds which in any human government would be scandalous. It attributes to God elements of character and of

administration which would cover any earthly ruler or parent with infamy.

The difficulty is not alleviated by saying that God is greater than man, that he is infinitely powerful, that therefore that which is right in man would not necessarily be right in God, and that that which is right in God may be wrong in man. Such a line of reasoning as this confounds the radical elements of right and wrong, and destroys the moral sense of the rules of judgment; for that which is right in God must be right in man, relative to his condition, and in due proportion and measure. The essential quality of right must be the same as regards the ruler and the ruled, at one end of the law or the other; for if I am wicked in such a way as to subject me to eternal penalty, with what kind of reasoning or conscience can I turn around and confess my guiltiness and my desert of everlasting punishment, and then worship the same act which I condemn in myself, springing from the same attribute in God? It stultifies human nature to do it. That which is wicked in man would be wicked in God; and it would be as much worse in God than in man as it is more pernicious in an infinite being at the head of government than it can be in an insignificant being at the bottom of government. There must be the same truth, the same justice, the same rectitude, the same benevolence, the same morality, in the one case as in the other. There must be one platform both for him that rules upon the circle of the heavens and for them that are ruled in the lower parts of the earth.

In the New Testament there appears a new germ, which, although it is not developed, is, both by John and by the Apostle Paul, opened in such a degree as to make its development quite possible, indeed almost inevitable, with us. It is derived, not from the past, but from the future. I have just read in your hearing Paul's latent theory:

"The creature was made subject to vanity."

By *vanity* is understood the transient, the evanescent, the secular.

"The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope."

The creature was made subject to the laws and conditions of this mortal life—it fell out that men were created as they were under the present laws of the discipline of this world—by reason of the great and joyous *hope* that lay along the line of promised development. While the old theory declares that men are in this world, in the condition in which they are, in consequence of Adam's sin, Paul, looking the other way, says that, while men in this world are subjected unwillingly to laws of limitation and weakness, it is for the sake of gradually unfolding and developing them; "because," as he further says, "the creature itself also *shall be delivered* from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

That is to say, looking in the light of the Gospel upon the fact of the world lying in wickedness, Paul says, "I behold the great race in that condition, not on account of their own willingness, but being subjected thereto by God, because it is a scheme which promises, through the very experiences of this condition, to open them more and more gloriously, until at last they shall break out of their nascent state, and come into a later stage of glorious liberty, and be the children of God."

We are born, not of Adam, but of Christ. Our roots take hold, not of the old soil of Eden, but of the soil of the New Jerusalem. Our theory of life is not to be evolved from the poems or the parabolic teachings that are but shadows and intimations and hints and dark sayings, according to the line of the instruction of antiquity. We are to take the clearer light which shines from the face of Jesus Christ; the light of God's providence; the light of the interpretation of that system of things under which we live.

Now under this mode of teaching the imperfection of the race and its urgent necessities are recognized just as clearly as they are in the old view. Ministers and others are afraid, and very justly, of any system of teaching which lightens the sense of responsibility. They say that men are prone to sink back to animal and worldly conditions, and that if you preach flattering doctrines to them, giving them to understand that they are good, and that

they only need to be a little more good; that if you comfort them and soothe them thus, the tendency of your preaching will be to carry them back again in contentment toward the germ and the seed. The fear is a valid one; and if there were no other way in which to prevent so serious a result, we might look with a great deal more allowance upon this method of declaring that men inherited from Adam a corrupt nature, that they all fell in him, and sinned in him, and so were brought under liability to the penalty and curse of God, the sin which was committed by their federal head being distributed by natural generation through the whole race—if that were the only way in which to keep men from the dirt and the clay, and to inspire in them some aspiration toward higher things, then there would be more justification for it; but it is not the only way: it is of all ways the lowest and the poorest. For mankind is developing, or easily may be developed, in such a way that while fear is not dispensed with, as it were, from behind, yet the motive power in advance is an *attraction toward things that are good.* It is not the fear of poverty that to-day makes men work; it is the ambition to rise higher. It is the development of a more manly quality in them which leads them on to desire better conditions of life. And in regard to the whole race, if they be so low that they cannot be stirred except by fear in its coarsest forms, then that may be used; but to say that that view is so essential that any change of it will work toward deterioration is false in fact, and still more false in philosophy.

On the other hand, the doctrine that the creature was made subject to this mortal and mutable state in order that out of it, by education and evolution, under the influence and guidance of the divine Spirit, he might come into the larger liberty, not of animal life, nor of man's life, as we understand it here, but of the life of the sons of God—that doctrine is full of inspiration, of attraction and of hope. All that is sweet in purity, all that is winning in affection, all that is fascinating in qualities addressed to the imagination, lies in such a theory as this: that men are born in seminal forms in this world; that the race comes in at the lowest

point; and that it is the divine plan that by laws, by educations, by industries, by instructions, under the supervision of God's providence, and under the stimulation of the Holy Spirit, they may be unfolded, and that by successional developments they may be brought out, by-and-by, into a larger sphere, into the spiritual sphere, into the sonship sphere, where they are to be like God. That theory has in it all the stimulus that comes from the fear of the other system, and it has in it the additional attractions and inspirations which belong to a higher moral plane of instruction. More than that, it falls in with a man's reason. It quadrates with a man's moral sense. It is in accordance with facts. It may not be with some men any further confirmation, though it will be with others, that it lies in the line in which modern philosophy seems likely to travel. The unfolding of the most materialistic school lies in the same direction. It lies in the same line as the science of our day, which is strangely co-incident with the line of thought of Paul, of John, of Peter, and of the whole of the New Testament writers; and when it shall be completed, I believe it will be the best commentary on the New Testament that was ever written. The New Testament is a very good commentary on the Old, but the Old Testament is a very poor commentary on the New.

Secondly, this view of man, as created at a low estate on purpose, as brought into this life at the bottom, rising higher and higher through a series of educational developments, and promising a final future manhood most glorious, does not do away with the doctrine of the divine and efficacious influence of God's Spirit. To teach, as every man in the scientific world does teach, that the floral kingdom has been developed from lower forms by growth through successive stages of evolution up to its present condition of variation is not absurd, as many have thought that it was; there is not a botanist forty years old on the globe who does not accept the doctrine of evolution in respect to the vegetable kingdom; but suppose a man fifty or sixty years old should say, "To teach that vegetation develops in this way is to teach that plants can get along without the sun; and we know that the sun is indispensable to the develop-

ment of plants"? You may not see any logical connection here, and there is none; but the objection is precisely parallel to the fears of many men who say, "If a man is born into this sphere on a lower plane, and if the divine problem is the evolution of men up through social, intellectual, moral and spiritual conditions to the higher state, then where is the use of the Holy Spirit?" Just as if the plan of evolution did not make a guiding supernal light, warmth and stimulation *more* necessary! The function of the Divine Spirit, according to the old theory, is to work in special lines of election. The whole world lies in wickedness; and the vast majority of men in accordance with that scheme are to be damned. A handful, here and there, are elected to be saved; and these elect, these glass-house plants, as it were, these conservatory vegetables under a glass church, the Divine Spirit is supposed to be working upon. That is the view which goes with the old system and the old theology.

In the New Testament theology the teaching is that man "was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope," because the creature looks forward to the glorious evolution and disclosure of itself in the sonship of God; but under such a system the revelation of the Divine Spirit is universal. It belongs to all ages and to every creature on the globe. It is infinite in its extent, as well as necessary—more necessary a thousand fold than in the artificial function which has been given to the Divine Spirit by the old theology. For what the sun is doing on this terraqueous globe, through ages vivifying it, and unfolding it toward ideal excellence, that same thing is the Sun of Righteousness doing upon the higher organizations in this world. The intelligent thought and soul of God, poured forth and stimulating the whole universe, is the operation of the Divine Spirit, according to the New Testament view of the origin of man, of his nature and of his destiny. It does not do away with that doctrine. It enlarges it and glorifies it, and exalts its sphere. It makes the functions of the Divine Spirit wonderful in the eyes of men who look upon the infinite necessities of this great outlying infantile race, that waits for its disclosure and development.

The reality, the intelligibility, and the necessity of the new birth are even more apparent under this New Testament view of the origin and the destiny of the race. It is held under the old theology that there is to be an absolute change —that all whom God elects he calls with an effectual calling, and that those who are called with an effectual calling are transformed, through the divine Spirit, by a renewing of their minds, and brought into a higher or Christian state. This is a view which, with the exception of the limitations of the present, is not to be contested. It is a view which ought to fill the mind with undying gladness. But it is even larger than we have been accustomed to teach it or understand it. If you understand that men begin low down in their animal natures, and that there is forever a vivific influence everywhere of the divine Spirit, by which whatever is reasonable and moral and spiritual in man shall come to a point where it dominates over the physical and animal, so that the forces of a man's inward life and outward life become rational and religious, then that point at which the spiritual comes into dominancy over the physical is the transition between death and life, between animalism and spiritualism, between the natural man and the spiritual man, between the flesh and the spirit, which Paul so much discusses. In other words, when, in the process of divine providence, men come to that point in which there is a clear ascendency in them of that which is high, and pure, and moral and religious, they are born into the spiritual life; it is a new birth. When men who live by the appetites, by the passions, by the will, by pride, by vanity, by selfishness, begin to live by rectitude, by love, by mercy, by justice, by truth, by goodness, there is a transition from the animal to the spiritual and the rational; and the transition is actual and noble.

Now, if this be a peculiarity of the development of the race instead of a few favored individuals, and if it be understood, and avowed, and taught, it gives to the doctrine of regeneration and the new birth a grandeur and dignity which it has not had in times gone by, when, according to the ecclesiastical system, it was a special act, be-

longing to a limited view. This race-doctrine, proclaimed as a part of God's great system, coördinate and coincident with nature, and as a part of nature looked at, not from a theologic standard, but from the divine standpoint, in which time, and the world's history, and the evolution of the races, by all influences as being elements of God's vast economy, by the influx of the divine Spirit lifting men higher and higher, through the moral state, through commerce, through industries, through everything, from heaven to earth—all things, working together for good—this doctrine of race-development by a new birth into a new life is grander than the special doctrine taught by the old theology. The special doctrine is true even in its specialty; and it is more true than it has been taught to be hitherto. Its limits are wider, its operation is more universal, than men have been wont to suppose.

This view shows why it is that a larger revelation of the future is not given to men; why so much is yet vague. We are constantly met with difficulties about the world to come. Things have been exaggerated and over-estimated. The Bible has been taught as containing something of everything that a man could ever want; and men have used it as though it were an encyclopedia of human knowledge, as well as a book of hints and general sailing directions. It was supposed, in the earlier ages of the church, that it taught astronomy. There was a grand fight on that subject, and then the church turned round and said, "Well, it is a revelation; and revelation does not undertake to teach science: it only undertakes to teach morality;" and gradually they gave up that the astronomy of Galileo need not be squared with the astronomy of Genesis.

The modern school of astronomers do not admit that there were simply six literal days of creation. When the geologists of England first began to develop the fact of the ages of creation as indicated in that other book, that revelation which men had tramped on and had not read, another theory was set on foot; and by and by the force of facts as developed in scientific schools compelled men of reason to admit that time and the world were right in the

way of the theory of the absolute creation in six days of twenty-four hours each. Here and there you will find a man yet who holds that the world was created in six days by a direct fiat of the divine will. Such a man is twin brother of the oldest mummy in the tombs of Egypt; and I think the mummy is the better of the two!

But, then, it was said that the Scriptures taught it; and the difficulty was evaded by saying, again, that the Scriptures were designed to teach, not how the world came into existence, but how men were to get out of it and be saved.

In the same way, the whole Levitical system was necessarily dropped out of Christian ecclesiasticism, because it was not adapted to modern times and ways.

Then, more lately, have come the psychological and ethnological investigations, inquiries into the history of the race, by which is to be determined how men came into this world; and it looks as though it were going to be shown that men did not come according to the literal statements concerning the Garden of Eden, that they did not come from the loins of the one man, Adam: all the facts disclosed by scientific investigation point to the development of men from the lowest form of savage life, by continuous gradations, running through all ages. "But," say men, "if you take that view, you will destroy the Bible;" and they have said that at every single step in which science has set forth the facts of God as they are revealed in the immutable testimony of nature. First the priest has run his head against it—and the fact has not been destroyed in any case.

Now, if it be determined, by the analogy of nature, by the study of customs and of governments, by tracing the peculiarities of judicial systems, by examining into ethnic ideas, the history of law being studied, the history of schools being studied, the history of the moral sense of mankind being studied—if it be determined as a fact that these things all converge toward one central teaching of the past, the time is coming when you will do in this case what you did in the cases of geology and astronomy and the Levitical system—admit the *fact* as incontrovertible; and you must see to it, if the fact is universal and belongs to the divine economy, and

is a part of the structure of God's creation, and is a revelation of God, that it is reconciled with the other divine revelation.

It is assumed that the revelation of the letter, on paper, is superior to the revelation of fact in nature. I shall not discuss that question. I only say this: that the revelation of fact exterior to the Bible invariably carries the day,—and will; must; ought to. God has spoken by the heavens, by the earth, and by the experience of the race. His revelation is embodied in laws, in customs, in religions, in histories. It is set forth by the industries of the world, and by the whole earthly conception of life. These have been gathered up in various ways; and all of them are part and parcel of a grander and wider scheme than has hitherto been embraced in the interpretation of the religion of the New Testament. Paul saw it, and John felt it. Paul almost stated it in philosophical terms. He looked out upon the world, and he saw that the problem of life was the problem of a race striving on one side against the animal, and seeking on the other side for the highest manhood elements; and he says, "These are irreconcilable. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." And he tell us too that this conflict did not come in in consequence of the fall of man. We have nothing to do with it. It was the divine decree, or the problem of creation, that men, born in a lower state, should escape, by development and education under the divine Spirit, out of the lower forms of life into the higher forms. And conversion, translation, is the successive evolution of men toward that higher development in the life that is to come.

This brings me back to the opening sentence of this head —namely, Why are we not put in better information with regard to these ultimate conditions? Why does not the Word of God teach us more than it has on such subjects? The only explanation that we have is, that the lower stage cannot understand the higher stage.

If my beans that are just above the ground—two great fat leaves—could talk, they would say to me, "Explain to us, if you please, what we are going to be;" and I should say to these two fatties that stand there, "Well, you are both of

you going to be sucked dry, you are going to quirl up, and you are going to fall off." "But what is meant by our career of summer? We were promised that if we would be good beans we should have a whole summer of splendid development; and if we are going to be sucked dry, and quirl up, and fall off, how can that be? We are only leaves, and cannot understand all that belongs to our destiny; so explain to us the rest." I say, "There is going to be a stem, a vine, and it is going to twine about a dry stalk that is called by the dignified name of *bean-pole;* and there is to be a blossom at every axil; and from each blossom is to come a long pod." "What do you mean by a vine? We cannot understand anything except leaves. Being leaves, anything outside of leaves transcends our knowledge."

Well, leaves that do not understand anything but leaves, how can they understand a vine, or an axil, or blossoms, or pods, or future beans? The lower does not understand the higher.

I have a four-legged heathen on my place—"Tommy." He is a most intelligent and a most discriminating little dog; he is a gentleman in disguise; and I am really sorry for him that he cannot talk. If ever there was a dog that was distressed to think that he could not talk, that dog is. I sit by him on the bank, of a summer evening, and I say, "Tommy, I am sorry for you;" and he whines, as much as to say, "So am I." I say, "Tommy, I should like to tell you a great many things that you are worthy of knowing;" and I do not know which is the most puzzled, he or I—I to get any idea into his head, or he to get any out of mine; but there it is: I know what he thinks, and he knows not what I think. He knows that there is something above a dog; and he manifests his canine uneasiness by whining, and in other ways. His aspiration shows itself from his ears to his tail. He longs to be something more and better; he yearns to occupy a larger sphere; but, after all, he does not, and he cannot.

I think you will find a much more dignified, and certainly a more philosophical, explanation of that very state of facts, in the first of Corinthians and the second chapter, from the twelfth to the sixteenth verses:

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man [the man of nature—the man of the body—the man of flesh] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. [They are to be recognized by the spiritual or moral faculties, and not by the flesh, not by the passions and appetites.] But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. [The higher understands the lower, but the lower cannot understand the higher. You cannot reach up to things of which you have had no experience.] For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

By just so much as men have the mind of Christ they have entered into the higher life, they are in the experience of it, and they are able experimentally, and so spiritually, to understand the things which belong to it. Therefore there is a psychological impossibility of developing in this lower sphere the plenitude of the truths which belong to the higher sphere. We carry civilization down to the lowest races; but there is much in civilization that every missionary and philanthropist knows cannot be at first accepted by the converted heathen, and that they do not accept until after two or three generations, when they have risen to the higher forms of civilization. These advanced conditions have to be grown into. They are the product of evolution.

So when it is asked that we should understand the whole economy of the other life, how is it possible to do it? How can I understand what that life is in which there is no flesh and blood—I, that was born and am nurtured by flesh and blood—except by fables, by poems, or by fictitious representations which disclose something to the imagination, but nothing to the philosophic and fact-loving powers? You cannot make heaven apparent to the earth until the heaven is like the earth, or the earth is like the heaven. Therefore it is impossible, in the nature of things, to bring down more than the shadow of divine realities to the minds of men.

In the night, weary, worn with watching and anxiety, I say, "Show me the morning and the morning's sun." "Nay,"

says the watcher by my side, "I cannot show you the sun; but look! there is where the sun is coming from, and there are the signs of his coming!" I behold: the dark is turning to gray, the gray is turning to pearl, the pearl is turning to white, and the white is turning to rose-color; and though I see not that which is called morning, though I see not the form of the sun, yet I see where it is coming from and the evidences of its coming.

I look into the other life; and men say, "Tell me, shall I fly when I get there? Shall I move without feet? Shall I work without hands?" I know not. That has not been revealed to me. Probably we shall not work there with such organs as we work with here, and probably we shall not move there in the same way that we do here, but these things have not been revealed, or if they have I cannot understand them. How can I understand spirit motion and life, which I have not made a matter of experience, and which cannot come except through experimental means?

I have experiences which interpret some things to me. In the highest moods of inspiration, when I stand on this platform I see things which I am utterly unable to see in my study or in the street. I see logical connections, running far, and comprehending great truths. I have intuitions of character and of the necessities of character. I have, if I may so say, certain ideas of what is needful for the reconciliation and harmonization of human affairs. But they are flights; I cannot reduce them to language; and yet they fill me with wonder and delight, so that, sometimes, my head seems like a globe of fire. I cannot even bring them to my own thought; they elude all after-analysis; I cannot put them in any book; I cannot expound them by words; but I have them; and they give me a sense of what the freedom of the soul is, and of what the after-life may be, though I cannot put them in any tangible form.

I sleep Saturday nights for Sundays; and my best sermons are always slept out—to relieve you of that necessity! Often and often I wake at four o'clock in the morning on Sunday, and lie in just so much somnolency that I am unconscious of it. It seems as though the body slept while the

reason and the moral sense were awake. It is frequently when lying in that state that I fashion out sermons; and if you could only hear them, you never would want to hear the ones that you do hear, they are so much larger, and so much more symmetrical. There is an element in them that I cannot describe; and I often spring from my bed, and say, "God help me, I will have a sermon to-day;" but the moment I try to imprison it into words, it is gone; and I say to myself, "I have an experience of the higher mind, educated above the appetites and passions, and brought into an elevated condition in which I have a discernment, a moral sense, of the possibilities of the human faculties." I have a faint, a feeble analogue of the disclosures of the other life; but I cannot define it to myself, and I certainly cannot expound it to you. I can say that I have it—that is all.

Now, extend this to the whole realm. Suppose it to be the divine problem to begin man in the seminal form, and to carry him up, stage by stage, working by nature, by society, by organizations, by all instrumentalities, to a certain point of education in this life where he shall break out into a higher one, where he shall say, "I am a son of God, I have felt my sonship, but what it shall be I do not know." And suppose he now says, "O God, reveal it to me;" God answers back to him, "You understand, and can understand, only what you have experienced." The only way in which a man can be taught anything that he wants to know is through his experience.

Revelation teaches us eternity. That is a thing which is not necessarily a matter of experience. It teaches us certain generalities, the understanding of which does not depend upon experience. It teaches us that heaven is a place where there is no sorrow, and where there are joys unutterable, which go on in gradations and ranks and cycles forever. These things we can understand in general; but it is not about these that we want to know. I want to know how I shall stand by the friend that I loved better than myself; and the heaven is mute. I want to know if she who was the companion of my toil and trouble and sin through life, whom I at last laid in the grave, and whom I wait for and think of, will seem to me

as she was, or as only one of a million drops that go to constitute that rainbow of glory which overhangs the throne of God; and there is not a word. Where is that most precious band of children that I have sent forward without nurse, without convoy, without teacher and without guide? I gave them to the airy arms of the unseen God, and he took them one by one from me. Are they children yet? Not one of them will answer me. Are they growing? Nobody will tell me. What is the condition of childhood in heaven? Children just quickened, dying in the mother's womb, do they live again? Children born crying and dying in one breath, have they a place there?

These questions, which come nearer and become tenderer as men come under the auspices of the Gospel of Christ, are things of which there is not a word said in revelation; and we stand saying, "Why have not these things been revealed?" The only reply that I can give is that the higher can understand the lower, but the lower cannot understand the higher. In the words of our text, it is said, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God!" We have got as high as that; but what that means, what our condition shall be, what is to be the full disclosure of sonship, we do not know; Paul did not know; he whose head rested on the Saviour's bosom did not know. These apostles, who were forerunners of the truth, who lived looking into the heavenly land, and who were the receptacles of divine inspiration by which light was made to come forth, said that they did not know what this after condition was; and how shall we know? It doth not yet appear. This we know: that we shall see him then as he is. Now we do not see him as he is. Why do we not? For the same reason that you do not see a thing as it is when you look through an imperfect medium. I go into a little summer-house, and on one side there is blue glass, on another side there is red glass, on another side there is green glass, and on the other side there is yellow glass. When I look through one, all creation is blue; when I look through another, it is red; when I look through another, it is green; and when I look through the other, it is yellow. I do not see creation as it is, but as these several glasses color it.

So men see things in the spirit land checkered and deformed by the imperfections of the medium through which they look. The glass of their experience is colored, or is full of wrinkles and warts. One interprets God from the intellectual side, and leaves out the domestic element. Another interprets him from the domestic side, and leaves out the intellectual element. Our conception of him, by reason of his magnitude and our minitude, is split up. Therefore we see him, not as he is, but in fragments. The apostle says that now we see things in part, but that when that which is perfect is come we shall see things in whole. He says that we are sons of God, but that it does not yet appear what that means. He says, however, that we know this: that when we shall see him as he is, we shall be like him. Yes; and the reason why we shall see him will be because we are like him. It is through identity, through likeness, that we shall behold him.

They, then, who beat their wings against such cold and everlasting questions, should stay their curiosity, their doubts and their scepticisms. Men should not go from the sanctuary or from the tomb, saying, "What kind of a revelation is this, which tells me the things that I do not need to know, and that I have outlived, or that society has, anyhow, and that does not tell me those things which my soul is in travail about? Where are my sons? Where are my daughters? Where are my companions? Where are my instructors? Where are those who were more to me than life itself? Tell me, O thou Heaven! The only answer to these questions that comes back to us is, "It doth not yet appear, but it shall." And we must take all these ultimate inquiries to the tribunal of the great hereafter. It is ours to crucify the flesh, to keep down lower animal man, and to exalt the spiritual man, the moral man, and the reasoning man. It is ours to bring into more and more ascendancy that part of our nature which is like God.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

The eye by which to investigate the divine nature is that by which you are like the divine.

I know not how it is with you, but as I grow older, and

see more of men, and study in detail the experiences, the possibilities and necessities that are upon the race, I do not diminish my sense of the sinfulness of mankind. On the contrary, it augments. I have a more profound sense of the sins of the world.

And this view of the development theory as it is applied to the problems of life does not diminish my sense of the Divine Spirit: it augments it. I should as soon expect that plants would grow without the summer's sun as that the human race would be developed without the quickening light and power of the spirit of God.

It does not take away from me, either, a sense of the necessity of a new birth. If we could but read it, "Ye must be born again" is written more plainly in nature than it is in the Word of God. It is the universal experience.

Neither does it take away my faith in the future. It bridges the chasm between this world and the other. It takes away from the vagueness which exists in respect to the world to come. It gives me a philosophical reason why I cannot understand more of God, and of the conditions of the heavenly land. It awakens in my soul an inexpressible gladness of hope, because it enables me to see that I am living toward a better state in spite of sin, and fault, and backslidings and stumblings. I as certainly know the way in which my life is tending, as the mariner knows what port he is making for. That port he means to reach if it takes him months and years, no matter what storms he may encounter; and I mean to reach a home of rest beyond the grave; and looking through sorrow, through temptation, through trial, through discipline, through mistake, through sin, through guilt, I behold my Pilot, restorative Love—Jesus is his name; and by faith of him I live in hope, knowing the work which he has begun and the attraction which he has set on foot, and that he will never abandon that work nor diminish that attraction, so that at last I shall conquer, and more than conquer, through him who loved me, and who is forever giving himself for me.

In this hope I do not ask you to abandon anything of the past and the old, but I urge you to take hold of the future

and the new. Be Christians after the teachings of the New Testament: not after the convictions of men, nor necessarily after the doctrines of the church. Be guided by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in your souls, and by the instructions of God through the letter. Look through the eyes of the New Testament into the New Jerusalem, the new life, the new gladness, the sonship, the victory, the eternity of blessedness.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

THOU art unapproachable even by our thoughts, O thou Almighty and everlasting God. By searching we cannot find thee out, nor understand the Almighty to perfection. We approach towards the light, but the compass thereof, the going forth, the source and glory, no man can measure. We are not less sure that thou art because thou art in such superabundance above our conception. We rather rejoice that thou art lifted up above the apprehension of men; that thou art more just and more gentle than men know; that thou art more loving and more lovable; that thou art more powerful by thy heart than by thy hand; that thou dost infinitely transcend the best things which we can bring to the conception of a God. And we shall not be disappointed when we see thee as thou art, and not as by the imperfect hand of man thou hast been delineated. When we behold thee in the proportion, and glory, and grandeur of thy whole being, and we are transformed into thine image and likeness, we shall be more than satisfied; we shall have more than peace; we shall break forth into ecstacy; and we, too, shall join the choral throng of the universe that shall ascribe honor, and glory, and power, and dominion unto Him who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever.

Let not, we beseech of thee, the brightness of the heaven where thou dwellest die out from our sight. Because we cannot take thee by the hand, because we may not, as did thy servant of old, lay our head upon thy breast, let us not forsake the thought of thee; and die not out of our mind because thou art not visible to us. Grant that we may conceive of thee as a companionable, an overhanging and a universal presence, though thou art transcendent above all we know or think, of being.

Draw near to us, this morning, with the quickening of thy brooding Spirit. Draw near to us to cleanse our hearts from fear, from doubt, from guilt, from all thoughts which are unworthy of the sons of God. Draw near to inspire in us all confidence, all hope, all joy, and all peace. Grant that in thee we may abide surely, strongly, beyond the reach of trouble—unreachable by temptation even. Grant that the fiery darts of the adversary may be quenched long before they strike the shield of our salvation.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest, this morning, upon every one that hath drawn near to thee, and especially and first to those who seek thee, ready to perish. Draw near to all upon whom have come sudden and surprising griefs; to all whose life is overcast as by storms falling upon the noon-day sun. Grant that in their desolation, in their surprise, and in the anguish of their great distress, they may still discern thee. Come thou to them, in the night, upon the stormy sea, walking on the waves, to calm their fear, and speak to them that they may find in thee deliverance from night, and darkness, and all trouble. Draw near to those who are wounded and bruised and know not how to bind up their wounds.

Thou everlasting Comforter, reveal thyself over against the world's groanings and pains. Hast thou forgotten thy skill? Shall

the desolate ones go uncared for? Visit those, we beseech of thee, who sit in the region and shadow of death. Bring light and salvation to every heart that needs thee to-day.

We pray for those who are tempted more than they are able to bear; for those whose better hours continually point to the higher way, but whose hours of weakness draw them down, and who vacillate between poor performance and good endeavor; and those who from day to day are drawn this way and that, and are growing discouraged because they are inconstant. O Lord, wilt thou strengthen them. Thou that dost heal the maimed, thou that dost carry those who are crippled, canst thou not still do for the soul, in the plenitude of thy divine and heavenly power, what thou didst for the body in thine earthly life and weakness?

We pray that thou wilt succor all those who are in great peril. Break the snare for those who are about to be caught thereby. May those who have digged pits for others themselves fall therein, and may the innocent go free.

We pray that thou wilt deliver the poor from hard-hearted and hard-handed men. Give guidance and direction to those who are perishing for lack of vision. Help those to put their care upon thee, the great Bearer of burdens, who are oppressed by multitudinous cares. We pray that those who are resting in their own wisdom which is from beneath may find better guidance in faith of rectitude, faith of truth, faith of the divine providence, and in the watch and care of God for all who put their trust in him.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt make it easy for those who have gone astray from thee to come back again. Grant that they may hear thy voice, which is full of encouragement, saying to them, This is the way: walk ye in it. And if there be any prodigals that are wandering, or that have wandered, and that are seeking to return, go thou to meet them and find them ere they shall come back.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to all the families that are represented in this congregation. May the blessing of Almighty God, that is full of peace, full of wisdom, and full of goodness, dwell in every household, that it may become a gate of heaven.

We pray for all who go forth into the conflicts of life, contesting its battles, and doing valiantly for themselves and for their fellows, that they may be strengthened of God with the wisdom that is from above, and that they may be able to acquit themselves like men.

We pray that thou wilt grant a blessing upon our whole land. Be pleased to remember and to bless the President of these United States, and those who are joined with him in authority. Bless the Congress assembled, that it may have inspired wisdom, and that it may deliberate upon the things that are for the welfare of this nation. Bless all judges, and courts, and magistrates, and rulers, and the whole people, that they may be obedient unto the Lord, and wise and temperate. May their prosperity stand not in outward things, but in a truer manhood; in a better, and wiser, and more benevolent patriotism.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt not bless this nation at the expense of any other: rather bless it that it may be the guide of the

weak, and their defender. And grant that all may partake of thy blessing.

We ask for ourselves that knowledge may prevail, and that in the light of truth superstitions may flee away, that ignorance and its hideous brood may disappear, and that the things which distract and torment mankind may perish.

We pray that thou wilt speed forward that great and glorious day of prediction when the Lord shall shine forth, and there shall be no night, but the glory of God shall reign upon the earth as the sun in the heavens. O Lord, let the day be cut short, and let the time hasten, when thou shalt, by thine appearing, drive away all doubt and all evil, and when thy will shall be done on earth as in heaven.

Hear us in these our petitions, and grant unto us not according to the wisdom of our asking, but according to the greatness of thy love and thy wisdom. And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit shall be praise evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, wilt thou add thy blessing to the word that has been spoken. Confirm and establish our faith in our need, in its supply, in thy providence, and in the mighty power with which thou art working in all things that pertain to life and glory. Grant that we may come into more blessed confidence with thee. May we not be afraid of thee. Thou art the God of love. Through ages men have not known it, and they have made thee a tyrant; they have drawn scowls on thy face; and they have made thee hate where thou didst but serve. Thou hast through ages been Father and Mother of the race. Thou hast been man's helper from the foundation of the world. Take away the barbaric, and give us the Christian view of thy nature, that we may walk and triumph in hope, in aspiration and in attainment, as much as through groans, through tears, through strifes, through defeats, yea, through victories and gladness. And thus may we come to our coronation, so that, at last, when our name shall be spoken in heaven, it shall be with shouts of gratulation from those who have known us, and felt our power, and worked with us, and for us, and for whom we have worked; and then may we enter in, having an exceeding abundant entrance ministered unto us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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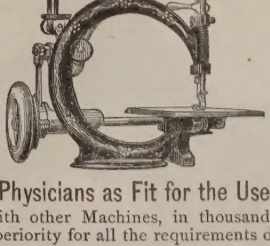

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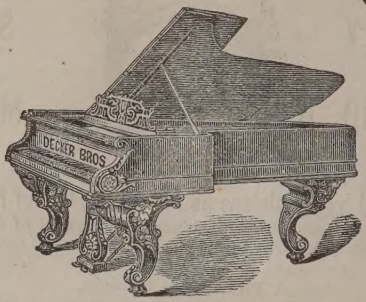

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